

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An improved method for an e-commerce retailer to display and sell items of a third party comprising:

identifying each item of a third party with a unique identifier;

5 associating the unique identifier of each item with an image of that item, said image residing on a computer maintained by a third party;

presenting at least some of the images to a user for on-line commerce, said images being retrieved from said computer maintained by a third party;

10 in response to an order request from the user for one or more items, identifying, based at least in part on said unique identifier, each item requested and an appropriate third party for each requested item; and

automatically generating an order for each requested item.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the items include products.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the items include services.

15 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the images of items include graphic images.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the images of items include descriptive text.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein a given unique identifier references a corresponding product Stock Keeping Unit (SKU) numbers.

20 7. The method of claim 1, wherein a given unique identifier references pricing information from a third party.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein a given unique identifier references order fulfillment information.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of presenting includes: requesting images from a third party;

receiving a list of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) for said requested images; and displaying an on-line page that displays images retrieved from said URLs.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the request for images includes background and formatting information of a particular third party.

5 11. The method of claim 1, wherein a particular third party provides photo-finishing services and the images correspond to user photographic images.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein a given third party provides Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) for images in various sizes and formats, thereby enabling retrieval and display of images to the user in various sizes and formats.

10 13. The method of claim 1, wherein a given third party initially provides smaller thumbnail images of the items and provides larger images in response to user requests.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein a given third party evaluates the request for images or descriptions and automatically indicates whether corresponding items are available.

15 15. The method of claim 1, wherein the unique identifier associated with a given item is stored in a user's shopping cart when the user selects the item.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the images are rendered on a Web page for display to the user.

20 17. The method of claim 1, wherein the unique identifier of an item requested by the user is employed for placing a fulfillment request with a corresponding third party.

18. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
automatically splitting an order including individual order items from more than one third party; and
assigning fulfillment of individual order items to the appropriate third parties.

19. The method of claim 1, wherein an order including items from the retailer and items from one or more third parties is split amongst the retailer and the appropriate third parties.

20. An improved method for an e-commerce retailer to sell items on-line that are displayed on a third party site, comprising:

identifying each item of a third party with a unique identifier;

in response to user requests regarding a particular item, redirecting the user to an appropriate third party site;

after the user selects one or more items on the third party site, receiving the unique identifier for each item so selected;

based on each unique identifier received, identifying each item selected by the user, including identifying an appropriate third party for fulfilling the selected item; and automatically generating an order for each item so identified.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the items include products.

22. The method of claim 20, wherein the items include services.

23. The method of claim 20, wherein the items include photo-finishing services.

24. The method of claim 20, wherein each unique identifier references a Stock Keeping Unit (SKU) number.

25. The method of claim 20, wherein each unique identifier references information for facilitating fulfillment from a third party.

26. The method of claim 20, wherein the unique identifier associated with a given item is stored in a user's shopping cart when the user selects the item.

27. The method of claim 20, wherein the unique identifier and related information is associated with the order placed by the retailer with the third party supplier.

28. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
automatically splitting an order when the order includes individual order items from more than one third party; and
assigning fulfillment of individual order items to appropriate third parties.

5 29. The method of claim 28, wherein an order including items from the retailer and items from one or more third parties is split amongst the retailer and the appropriate third parties.

30. A system providing an improved method for an e-commerce retailer to display and sell items of a third party, said system comprising:

10 an image server module for receiving information requests regarding certain items, and providing images and descriptions of said items;

an order engine module, in communication with said image server module, for processing orders for items; and

15 a fulfillment module, in communication with said order engine module, for automating fulfillment of pending orders from one or more third party fulfillers.

31. The system of claim 30, wherein the items include products.

32. The system of claim 30, wherein the items include services.

20 33. The system of claim 30, wherein the items include graphic images corresponding to photo-finishing services offered to a user, at least some graphic images being based on photographs previously taken by the user.

34. The system of claim 30, wherein the order engine module automatically validates each order.

35. The system of claim 30, wherein the order engine module automatically checks availability of each item.

36. The system of claim 30, wherein the order engine module automatically determines an appropriate fulfiller for each item.

37. The system of claim 30, wherein the order engine module:

automatically splits an order among more than one third party fulfiller; and

5 automatically assigns fulfillment of individual order items to one or more appropriate third party fulfillers.

38. The system of claim 30, wherein the order engine module splits orders including items from the retailer and items from one or more third parties fulfillers amongst the retailer and appropriate third party fulfillers.

10 39. The system of claim 30, wherein the fulfillment module automatically routes an order for each item to be supplied by a third party fulfiller to an appropriate third party fulfiller.

40. The system of claim 30, wherein the fulfillment module automatically requests a status update regarding each order item from a corresponding third party fulfiller that has
15 been selected to fulfill such order item.

41. The system of claim 30, wherein the fulfillment module receives a status update on an order item from a corresponding third party fulfiller, and, in response, automatically communicates the status update to a particular party requiring fulfillment of the order.

42. An improved e-commerce system for providing products and services of third
20 parties, said system comprising:

computer-implemented program logic for receiving information requests regarding certain graphic images and providing digital images for display;

computer-implemented program logic for processing orders for graphic images; and

25 computer-implemented program logic for managing fulfillment of orders from one or more third party fulfillers.

43. The system of claim 42, wherein the computer-implemented program logic for processing orders automatically validates each order.

44. The system of claim 42, wherein the computer-implemented program logic for processing orders automatically checks availability of the graphic images.

5 45. The system of claim 42, wherein the computer-implemented program logic for processing orders automatically determines a source of supply of each graphic image.

46. The system of claim 42, wherein the computer-implemented program logic for processing orders automatically obtains digital copies of the appropriate graphic images after receiving orders for said graphic images.

10 47. The system of claim 42, wherein the computer-implemented program logic for processing orders packages digital copies of graphic images together with an order for those particular graphic images, and automatically routes the order and digital copies of the graphic images to a third party fulfiller for fulfillment.

15 48. The system of claim 42, wherein the computer-implemented program logic for processing orders automatically splits an order including individual graphic images from more than one third party fulfiller, and assigns fulfillment of individual order items to one or more appropriate third party fulfillers.

20 49. The system of claim 42, wherein the computer-implemented program logic for processing orders splits orders including items from the retailer and items from one or more third parties fulfillers amongst the retailer and the appropriate third party fulfillers.

50. The system of claim 42, wherein the fulfillment module automatically routes each order for graphic images to be supplied by a third party fulfiller to an appropriate third party fulfiller.

25 51. The system of claim 42, wherein the order engine module automatically determines a source of fulfillment of each graphic image.

52. The system of claim 42, wherein the computer-implemented program logic for managing fulfillment of orders automatically requests a status update regarding individual order items comprising a pending order.

5 53. The system of claim 42, wherein the computer-implemented program logic for managing fulfillment of orders receives a status update on an order item from a third party fulfiller and automatically communicates the status update to a particular party requiring fulfillment of the order.